

Hiawatha Fire & Rescue

Policy 604
Emergency Operations
Motor Vehicle Fires
5/25/2001

I. Scope-

This standard was created to ensure the safety of members involved in suppressing motor vehicle fires

II. General Guidelines-

- A.** The number and variety of motorized vehicles increases each day. It is impossible to completely identify all of the problems that might be encountered while extinguishing such a fire. Nevertheless, some commonalties do exist, and the general guidelines of this standard should be followed when combating a fire in a motorized vehicle.
- B.** The incident commander should always remain cautious and assume the worst until he / she can be certain that conditions are safe. For example, if a burning vehicle is placarded as transporting a hazardous material, assume that the incident is a haz-mat incident until it can be determined that no hazardous materials are burning or leaking in the vehicle.
- C.** If the fire appears to be the result of an accident, the incident commander should consider the mechanism of the accident in developing his / her strategy for managing the incident.
- D.** The first priority at the scene of a vehicle fire is rescue. The incident commander must assume that someone is trapped in the burning vehicle until having ascertained that all of the vehicle occupants have gotten out.
- E.** The second priority is the safety of the firefighters, rescue workers, and spectators. If spectators are present, remove them to a safe distance. Do not place firefighters and rescue workers in harms way unnecessarily. Remember, do not risk a lot for a little.
- F.** It is important to control the flow of traffic. The need to minimize the disruption of traffic in heavily congested areas must be balanced by the need to provide for the safety of firefighters and rescue workers. Whenever possible, direct traffic away from the incident.

III. Procedures-

- A.** Apparatus placement -
 - 1. Position the apparatus uphill and upwind from the burning vehicle. This will keep the crew out of the smoke and prevent leaking fuel from running underneath the apparatus.
 - 2. Apparatus should never be parked closer than 100 feet from the burning vehicle whenever traffic conditions permit. If the vehicle is labeled as transporting hazardous materials, increase this distance based on the recommendations of the DOT Emergency Action Guide.

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3. The driver should position the apparatus to block at least one lane of the road to create a barrier between the firefighters and oncoming traffic. Ideally, the angle of the apparatus will allow the driver to view the burning vehicle from the pump operators position and not expose the driver to oncoming traffic.
 4. Secure sufficient room for an ambulance, additional apparatus, or a helicopter ambulance in case such resources are needed.
- B. Safety precautions**
1. Members engaged in firefighting and rescue efforts shall wear full protective clothing and SCBA. Protective clothing shall not be removed until the possibility of reignition has been removed.
 2. The presence of broken glass and other sharp objects mandates that personnel wear gloves and safety equipment to prevent the possibility of injury even after the fire has been extinguished.
 3. If applicable, stabilize the burning vehicle as soon as possible to prevent movement. This may be accomplished in a variety of ways, such as using wheel chocks, cribbing, a winch, etc.
 4. If it becomes necessary to open the hood, a hatch, or other opening to make a rescue or extinguish a fire, prop open the hood or hatch to prevent accidental closing due to the failure of a spring, rod, or compressed cylinder.
 5. De-energize the vehicle as soon as possible by disconnecting the battery. Take care to prevent sparks in the event flammable or combustible vapors or liquids are present.
 6. If the operation takes place in darkness, illuminate the scene properly. Operating members should wear turnouts or other reflective clothing to minimize the risk of being struck by other vehicles, including incoming apparatus.
 7. Also consider the impact of strobe and other warning lights on visibility. Turn them off when safe to do so.
 8. Firefighters should be aware of the hazards associated with air bags, energy absorbing bumpers, downed or overhead power lines, hollow drive shafts, high pressure hoses on power steering and air- conditioning systems, air-suspension systems, and the danger of exploding tires equipped with split rims, such as the wheels used on larger vehicles and some pickups.
 9. Establish adequate water supply. Hose streams should be adequate for the volume of fire. Typically, the minimum size deployed should be a 1 ½". Approach the burning vehicle from the upwind side whenever possible.

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10. Never stick your head inside a vehicle while it is still burning and never crawl under a vehicle to extinguish a fire.
11. A variety of combustible metals are used for engine blocks, wheels, and other components. These may react adversely with water and may require the use of specialized extinguishing agents.

IV. Operations-

1. Engine 284 is the primary apparatus utilized for responding to vehicle fires.
 - A. Members shall don appropriate SCBA and PPE while enroute to the fire scene.
 - B. The officer shall assign initial assignments. These assignments are:**
 1. **Officer**
 2. **Nozzle**
 3. **Back-up**
 4. **Irons**
 5. **Driver Operator**

Each assignment shall have specific tools and initial tasks, much like our truck company and engine company operations.

Position	Tools	Task
Officer	20 Lbs Dry Chemical Extinguisher Radio Wheel Chock	Size-up Safety Vehicle Victim Search Vehicle stabilization
Nozzle	Hose Line	Fire Attack
Back Up	Hose Line	Fire Attack
Irons	Axe and Halligan	Entry
Driver Operator		Pump Operations

- C. The rear 1 ½" preconnect line shall be the initial attack line for vehicle fires, as this outlet is equipped with an inline foam eductor.
 1. The load shall be flat loaded with pull loops after the first fifty feet of hose.
 2. The Firefighter pulling the line shall pull enough hose to reach the fire and enough hose to appropriately function at the fire. The hose will then be broken and attached to the rear outlet on the engine.
 - C. Foam shall be used at the direction of the incident commander.
2. **Attacking the Vehicle Fire**
 - A. All efforts shall be made to attack the fire from the corners of the vehicle.
 - B. All efforts shall be made to initially attack the fire take place from a safe distance. Thus not exposing the attacking crew to unnecessary danger.

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- D. The Firefighter backing the nozzleman up shall obtain a halligan tool which may be needed to gain access to the engine / passenger compartment of the vehicle. The halligan tool is located in the drivers side rear compartment on 284.
 - E. When manpower permits, the incident commander shall appoint one member of the crew to maintain a safe distance between oncoming traffic and crews working at the scene. This person shall act as a traffic spotter and notify the incident commander should an unsafe condition exist.
3. 280- Tanker 280 responds as the second unit for all Vehicle fires. 280 shall respond to the scene and appropriately stage. Water transfer from 280 to Engine 284 shall take place via the portable pump and 2 ½" hose on the rear of the tanker unless directed otherwise by the Incident Commander.
4. 281- Rescue 281 is the third responding apparatus for all vehicle fires. 281 shall respond with appropriate staffing and stage upon arrival at the scene. The crew of 281 shall don appropriate PPE and SCBA enroute to the scene.

NOTE: All crews in staging shall await orders from the Incident Commander prior to engaging in any Firefighting activity.